The Crucifixion as Covenant's End: Christian Thinkers on the Fulfillment and Transformation of Judaism

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For Christians who believe the crucifixion marked a decisive rupture in salvation history, the question is both simple and profound: Did Judaism, as a covenant that could lead to salvation, end at the moment Christ died? This paper explores that conviction not through polemics, but through the voices of some of Christianity's greatest minds—Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Pascal, Kierkegaard, and C.S. Lewis. Each in his own way affirms the central claim that the Old Covenant reached its intended fulfillment, consummation, or transformation at the cross. The Temple veil tore; the sacrificial system ended; the Law as mediator gave way to grace; and the Messiah long awaited was, Christians believe, revealed in Christ. The aim of this paper is not to attack Judaism—nor to deny the beauty, depth, and holiness of the Hebrew Scriptures—but to articulate, with sympathy and clarity, why orthodox Christianity has always held that the crucifixion inaugurated a New Covenant that supersedes the old. By grounding this thesis in classical Christian thought, we avoid modern distortions and return to the sources—Scripture, early Church Fathers, medieval scholastics, Reformers, and modern Christian philosophers. The result is a theological map of the moment the world changed.

Keywords: crucifixion, New Covenant, Old Covenant, supersessionism, Judaism, fulfillment theology, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Pascal, Kierkegaard, C.S. Lewis, covenantal transformation, salvation history.

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1. Introduction: The Moment the Veil Tore

1.1 The crucifixion as a turning point in sacred history

At the moment of Jesus' death, the veil of the Temple was torn in two (Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45). This act, both literal and symbolic, stands as a definitive rupture in redemptive history. Theologically, it represents the end of the Levitical priesthood, the obsolescence of temple sacrifices, and the opening of direct access to God for all humanity—Jew and Gentile alike—through Christ. This event is not only a Christian doctrinal claim but a radical reinterpretation of continuity and discontinuity within sacred history. If Christ is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17), then Judaism, as it had been practiced, necessarily undergoes transformation or culmination in Him.

1.2 Judaism as preparation, not permanence

From a Christian theological perspective, the Hebrew Scriptures prepare the way for the Messiah, but they do not constitute the final revelation. This notion—most forcefully argued by Augustine of Hippo in *Contra Faustum* and *The City of God*—frames Judaism as a temporary pedagogical covenant (cf. Galatians 3:24–25) meant to point toward the New Covenant. Martin Luther, especially in his later writings, saw the continuing Jewish rejection of Christ as a theological impasse with eschatological weight. C.S. Lewis viewed the Law as a schoolroom, with Christ as the fulfillment of its ultimate lesson. For all these thinkers, Judaism had glory—but a fading one, eclipsed by the coming of the Logos incarnate.

1.3 Why Christian theology cannot avoid the question of covenantal finality

The New Testament makes radical claims about the finality of Christ's priesthood (Hebrews 7–10), the universality of His atonement, and the obsolescence of the Mosaic covenant. These assertions force the Church into a position: either Christ completes the Law and renders the old system fulfilled and surpassed, or He does not. There is no theological neutrality here. Kierkegaard, in his exploration of paradox and offense, sees the Cross as the ultimate stumbling block—precisely because it requires renunciation of former categories, including religious identity. The Church's relationship with Israel is therefore not merely historical or political, but existential and theological.

1.4 Overview of thinkers to be engaged

This paper explores the cruciform rupture through the voices of major Christian thinkers who wrestled with the meaning of Israel, the Law, and the coming of Christ:

- **Augustine**, for whom the Jewish people bear witness to the old covenant while being providentially preserved until the end of days.
- **Martin Luther**, whose trajectory from Hebraic sympathy to harsh polemic illustrates the unresolved tensions within Reformation theology.

- **Søren Kierkegaard**, who emphasized faith as the leap beyond all law and mediation.
- **C.S. Lewis**, who framed Judaism as a foreshadowing narrative fulfilled in Christ, accessible to imagination and reason.

Together, these voices enable a deeper Christian reckoning with the meaning of the crucifixion for Judaism—and for the nations.

2. The Old Covenant: Its Promises, Functions, and Built-In Limits

The Old Covenant, centered around the Mosaic Law and the covenantal relationship between God and Israel, was a divine arrangement with profound theological, moral, and historical significance. However, within Christian theology—particularly in light of the crucifixion—it is not merely viewed as superseded but as having an internal trajectory pointing beyond itself.

2.1 Mosaic Law as Pedagogue (Galatians 3)
In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he describes the Law as a *paidagogos*—a tutor or guardian designed for a temporary phase (Gal. 3:24–25). The function of the Law was not salvific in itself but preparatory: to reveal sin, shape moral consciousness, and ultimately lead Israel—and humanity—toward Christ. Once Christ came, Paul argues, the tutor's purpose was fulfilled, and believers are no longer under its authority. This is not a denigration of the Law but a recognition of its temporal role within a larger redemptive arc.

2.2 The Sacrificial System and Its Symbolic Impermanence
The Levitical sacrificial system was central to ancient Israel's worship and atonement practices. However, even within the Hebrew Scriptures, there are hints of its insufficiency: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire" (Ps. 40:6) and "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (Hos. 6:6). The Letter to the Hebrews makes this theological case explicit: "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). Instead, Christ's self-sacrifice is presented as the singular, eternal offering that fulfills and replaces the entire system (Heb. 10:12–14). The tearing of the temple veil at the crucifixion (Matt. 27:51) becomes a visible sign that the priestly and sacrificial economy of the Old Covenant has reached its telos in Christ.

2.3 The Prophetic Anticipation of Something "New" (Jeremiah 31:31–34)
Jeremiah's prophecy of a "new covenant" offers one of the clearest Old Testament acknowledgments of the limitations of the Mosaic framework. The new covenant will not be like

the one made at Sinai—a covenant broken repeatedly—but one inscribed on the heart, internal rather than external, and marked by intimate knowledge of God and definitive forgiveness. Christian theologians have interpreted this as a clear pointer to the ministry of Jesus, whose blood he himself called "the blood of the new covenant" (Luke 22:20), echoing Jeremiah's promise.

2.4 Augustine: "The Old Revealed in the New, the New Hidden in the Old"

Augustine, one of the most influential Christian thinkers on the relationship between the Testaments, emphasized their deep continuity: "In the Old the New is concealed, in the New the Old is revealed" (*Quaest. in Hept.*, 2.73). For him, the Old Covenant was always meant to point toward Christ. The ceremonies, prophecies, and institutions of Israel foreshadowed the coming of the Messiah and were rightly honored in their time. However, with the advent of Christ, their symbolic and preparatory functions were fulfilled. Augustine did not despise the Old Covenant—he revered it—but he saw it as a necessary prelude to the greater revelation of grace and truth through Jesus Christ.

This section establishes that the Old Covenant was never meant to be an eternal structure, but rather a guided, symbolic, and prophetic scaffold that gave way to the universal covenant inaugurated by the crucified and risen Messiah.

3. The Crucifixion as Fulfillment and Abrogation

The crucifixion stands at the center of Christian theology as both the culmination and the termination of the Old Covenant. It fulfills every sacrifice, every prophecy, every symbol of Israel's redemptive grammar—and simultaneously renders its priesthood, ritual economy, and covenantal structures obsolete. This section examines how Scripture and the great Christian thinkers articulate this dual movement of fulfillment and abrogation.

3.1 Jesus as Final Priest, Final Sacrifice, and Final Mediator (Hebrews 7–10)

The Letter to the Hebrews presents the most explicit theological argument for the end of the Old Covenant. Jesus is portrayed as:

- **High Priest** in the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 7:17)
- **Perfect Mediator** of a superior covenant (Heb. 8:6)

- **Final Sacrifice**, offered once for all (Heb. 10:12)

Unlike the Levitical priests—who offer sacrifices "day after day" (Heb. 10:11)—Christ offers Himself **once**, accomplishing what the Law could never achieve: true and final atonement. His priesthood does not coexist with the old; it replaces it. Hebrews emphasizes that when the perfect comes, the imperfect must pass away: "He sets aside the first to establish the second" (Heb. 10:9).

Thus, the crucifixion is not merely an event within Judaism but the theological conclusion of the entire Temple-centered system.

3.2 The Tearing of the Temple Veil as Theological Event

All three synoptic Gospels record that at the moment of Jesus' death:

"The veil of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom."
—Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45

The veil separated the Holy of Holies—the dwelling place of God—from the people. Its tearing symbolizes:

- **the end of the sacrificial priesthood**,
- **the removal of mediated access to God**,
- **the obsolescence of Temple worship**, and
- **the inauguration of a universal, direct access to God through Christ.**

The physical tearing is a divine act ("from top to bottom"), dramatizing that God Himself has closed the era of the Old Covenant.

3.3 Aquinas: The Ceremonies of the Old Law Cease to Bind

Thomas Aquinas articulates the most systematic theological interpretation of covenantal abrogation. In *Summa Theologiae* I–II, Q. 103, he argues:

- The **moral law** remains, as it reflects God's eternal nature.
- The **ceremonial law** is fulfilled and therefore abolished.
- To continue observing ceremonial law **after Christ** is "mortal sin,"
  because it implicitly denies Christ's completed sacrifice.

“The ceremonies of the Old Law are dead, and their observance is deadly.”
—*ST* I–II, Q. 103, Art. 4

For Aquinas, the crucifixion doesn’t merely fulfill the Old Covenant—it renders its ritual structures spiritually invalid because they have served their purpose.

3.4 Luther: The Promises End with Christ’s Arrival

Martin Luther, especially in his mature writings, asserts that once Christ—the promised Messiah—has come, Judaism no longer has theological justification for its continued expectation.

For Luther:

- The Law is subordinate to the Gospel.
- The Prophets all pointed to Christ.
- Once the Messiah came, the anticipatory structure of Judaism collapsed.

“All the prophets prophesied of Christ. When he came, the promises came to an end.”
—Luther, *Against the Jews and Their Lies* (tone noted but theological point clear)

He emphasizes that the Old Covenant was a shadow: real, meaningful, but not final. Christ is the substance.

3.5 Pascal: Jewish History Only Makes Sense If Christ Is Messiah

Blaise Pascal, in the *Pensées*, sees Judaism as the divine preparation for Christianity. He admires the Jewish people for their fidelity to the Scriptures, but he insists that their story becomes incoherent apart from Christ.

“The Jewish religion… was the anticipation of the Christian religion.”
—*Pensées*, §602

Pascal argues that:

- The genealogies, prophecies, and sacrificial patterns of Israel
  are like a lock designed for a single key.
- Christ is the only key that fits.

- If Christ is not the Messiah, the entire arc of Jewish sacred history loses its meaning and trajectory.

He concludes that rejecting Christ after His coming is not a continuation of ancient Judaism but a departure from it.

Summary of Section 3

To the earliest Christians and to the great Christian theologians after them, the crucifixion was not one moment among many—it was **the moment** God brought Israel's preparatory covenant to completion. In Christ, the roles of priest, sacrifice, and mediator converge into a single act that ends the old and inaugurates the new. The veil tears. The sacrifices stop. The covenant shifts. The Law gives way to grace. The Promised One arrives, and the promise itself is fulfilled.

This is why Christianity views Judaism as honored, foundational, essential—and yet no longer salvifically operative after the cross.

4. Augustine: The Church as the True Israel

Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD) remains one of the most influential voices in the formation of Christian theology concerning the relationship between the Church and Israel. Writing amidst theological controversy and the decline of Roman political power, Augustine articulated a vision of the Church that did not erase the Jewish people, but repositioned their covenantal role in light of Christ's fulfillment of the Law.

4.1 The Jews as "witness people" but not covenantally salvific

In *City of God* (Book XVIII), Augustine famously refers to the Jews as a "witness people" whose continued existence testifies to the truth of Scripture and the promises of God. However, he does not view their present state as one of salvific covenant. For Augustine, their preservation is not a sign of an ongoing redemptive role, but rather a divine object lesson: a people once chosen, now eclipsed by the full dawn of Christ.

4.2 The shift from shadow to substance

Augustine frequently draws from Pauline theology to describe the Old Covenant as a "shadow" of the New. The sacrificial system, temple worship, and ritual laws pointed forward to Christ, but once Christ came, those things were fulfilled and rendered obsolete. In his *Contra Faustum*, Augustine emphasizes that to return to Jewish rites after Christ's coming is to cling to the husk after the grain has arrived.

4.3 The Law written on tablets vs. the Law written on hearts

Drawing from Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36, Augustine distinguishes between the external Law of Moses and the internal Law of grace. The true fulfillment of God's covenant is not a legal code, but the indwelling of the Spirit, transforming believers from within. The Church, as the community of those whose hearts have been circumcised (Romans 2:29), inherits the promises not by bloodline but by faith.

4.4 Augustine's pastoral caution against triumphalism

Despite his firm stance on the supersession of the Old Covenant, Augustine also warns against arrogance or cruelty toward the Jewish people. He insists that Christians must not persecute the Jews, but rather view their continued presence as part of God's providential plan—a living reminder of salvation history. This "witness role" is both a rebuke and a warning to the Church, which could also fall into error if it forgets grace.

In sum, Augustine helps shape a theological position in which the Church is the continuation and fulfillment of Israel—not by replacement through violence or pride, but by spiritual inheritance and divine unfolding.

5. Aquinas: The Old Law as Dead After Christ

Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), the foremost medieval theologian of the Church, provides the most systematic and philosophically precise account of how the Old Covenant functions once Christ has come. In the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas argues that while the Old Law was divinely given and holy, it contained internal elements that necessarily expired, transformed, or were elevated by the advent of Christ. Aquinas is not hostile toward Judaism; instead, he treats the Law with reverence as a pedagogical stage of divine revelation—one that naturally reaches its endpoint in Christ, the perfection of all law.

5.1 Distinction Between Moral, Judicial, and Ceremonial Law

Aquinas famously divides the Mosaic Law into three categories:

1. **Moral Law** – rooted in natural law and reflective of God's unchanging character (e.g., the Ten Commandments).
2. **Judicial Law** – civil and penal regulations governing Israel as a theocratic nation-state.
3. **Ceremonial Law** – sacrificial rites, priestly rituals, dietary rules, purity codes, and festivals.

He argues that:

- **Moral Law remains**, not because of Moses, but because moral truth is eternal.
- **Judicial Law expires**, because the political structure of ancient Israel no longer binds Christians.
- **Ceremonial Law is abolished**, because Christ fulfills all its prefigurative symbolism.

This tripartite distinction allows Aquinas to both affirm the goodness of the Law and explain its cessation.

5.2 Why the Ceremonial Law Became Mortal Sin to Observe

This is one of Aquinas' boldest claims: observing the Old Covenant rituals **after** the crucifixion is not merely unnecessary—it is spiritually dangerous.

He writes:

"The ceremonies of the Old Law are dead; their observance is mortal sin."
—*ST* I–II, Q. 103, Art. 4

His reasoning:

- The ceremonial laws were **signs pointing to Christ**.
- Once the reality has arrived, continuing to cling to the signs is a denial of the fulfillment.
- To persist in the old ceremonies is to behave as though Christ had not come.

Thus, ceremonial observance after Christ is interpreted as a theological regression that undermines the Gospel.

Aquinas does not apply this judgment sociopolitically to Jews living after Christ—his concern is internal to Christian commitment. Still, it underscores his conviction that the old system is theologically expired.

5.3 Christ as Fulfillment of Prophecy and Priesthood

Aquinas places Christ at the center of Jewish prophecy and priesthood. For him:

- Every sacrifice prefigured the cross.
- Every priest prefigured Christ the High Priest.

- Every Passover meal prefigured the Eucharist.

Thus, the crucifixion is not one event among many—it is the **final meaning** toward which all of Israel's ritual life pointed. Christ "perfects" the Law, not by adding more rules, but by embodying everything the Law anticipated.

Once Christ has offered the true sacrifice, Aquinas argues, the Temple system becomes **emptied** of divine purpose:

Christ's sacrifice is "perfect, once for all" (*ST* III, Q. 22).

There can be no parallel priesthood, no parallel offering, no parallel covenantal path.

5.4 Israel's Role: Providential but Not Permanent

Aquinas views Israel as chosen for a specific, time-bound role in salvation history:

- They received the Law.
- They preserved the Scriptures.
- They foreshadowed Christ through rites, sacrifices, and liturgies.
- They were custodians of the prophetic tradition.

But this role, he argues, was **never meant to continue indefinitely**. It was inherently transitional:

"The Old Law was given to prepare for the New."
—*ST* I–II, Q. 98

Israel's purpose was to bring forth the Messiah; once He came, the preparatory phase ended, like scaffolding removed after the structure is completed.

Israel's ongoing existence has meaning—but not covenantal continuity. Aquinas does not adopt Augustine's "witness people" model as explicitly, but he shares with him the core principle: the Old Covenant is fulfilled, transformed, and rendered obsolete once Christ enters history.

Summary of Section 5

Aquinas stands as the clearest theological articulator of why Christianity sees the Old Covenant as **holy but concluded**, **divine but fulfilled**, **meaningful but no longer binding**. His distinction between moral, judicial, and ceremonial law provides a stable framework for Christian doctrine,

while his rigorous arguments about the ceremonial law underscore the radical finality of Christ's sacrifice.

In Aquinas' view, Christ does not destroy the Old Covenant—He brings it to its intended completion. The result is not antagonism toward Israel, but a theological recognition that its covenantal mission, in Christian eyes, has reached its fulfilled end.

6. Luther: Gospel Over Law

6.1 Early Sympathy vs. Later Harsh Polemics

In Martin Luther's early writings, there is a tone of cautious respect for the Jewish people. He hoped that by presenting the gospel clearly, Jews would convert to Christianity upon seeing that Jesus was the fulfillment of their scriptures. His 1523 tract *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew* reveals a posture of hopeful persuasion rather than condemnation. However, this sympathy later gave way to some of the harshest polemics in Christian history, most notably in his 1543 treatise *On the Jews and Their Lies*. While these writings are morally reprehensible and have rightly been condemned, they reflect a theological conviction that Judaism, as a covenantal system, was obsolete after Christ's coming. For Luther, the persistence of Judaism into the post-Crucifixion era was not simply erroneous—it was a rejection of the completed promise of God.

6.2 Christ as the End of the Law (Rom. 10:4)

Luther consistently emphasized Paul's declaration in Romans 10:4—"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." In his *Lectures on Romans*, Luther interprets this as the definitive cessation of the Mosaic covenant's authority. The Law served a temporary, preparatory function: to reveal sin and drive sinners to grace. With the advent of Christ, that function had been fulfilled. This was not mere supersessionism but a reordering of theological history: Christ is the telos, the goal and termination point, of the Law's relevance for salvation.

6.3 The Prophetic Promises Cease in Christ

Luther understood Old Testament prophecy as linear and convergent: all prophetic utterances, types, and promises find their resolution in Jesus. Once that convergence had taken place—once the "seed" had come (Gal. 3:16)—no further covenantal structures were needed. The Old Covenant's types (e.g., sacrifices, priests, temple) were shadows that dissolved in the light of Christ's presence. He was the new temple, the new sacrifice, and the eternal high priest. Hence, there could be no return to the previous dispensation without denying the sufficiency of Christ.

6.4 The Reformation Emphasis on Grace Over Covenantal Works

At the heart of the Reformation was the rediscovery of *sola gratia*—grace alone—as the basis for salvation. In this context, Luther viewed the Jewish commitment to Torah observance as part of a broader human error: the belief that righteousness can be earned by works. Judaism became, for Luther, the clearest example of what happens when the Law becomes an end in itself, rather than a schoolmaster pointing to Christ (Gal. 3:24). His concern was not just doctrinal but pastoral: to remain under the Old Covenant was to forfeit the liberating power of the gospel. Grace had come, and the age of covenantal obligation had passed.

7. Pascal: Judaism Completed, Not Destroyed

7.1 The Jews as custodians of the Messiah

Blaise Pascal, in his *Pensées*, presents the Jewish people not as obsolete or rejected, but as divinely appointed custodians of the messianic promise. Their preservation as a distinct people, even in dispersion and suffering, is to him not an accident of history but a sign of providence. "The Jewish people," he writes, "are the book in which our faith is written." He views their Scriptures, customs, and prophetic tradition as intentional groundwork laid for the coming of Christ. Their role, therefore, is crucial—not because of salvific sufficiency, but because of preparatory necessity.

7.2 Judaism's meaning only coherent if Christ is its fulfillment

Pascal argues that the coherence of Jewish history—its rites, its persistence, its Scriptures—is only intelligible in light of Christ. Without Christ, the Jewish story seems to culminate in silence and contradiction: a messianic religion with no messiah. But if Jesus is the Messiah, the entire arc of Jewish revelation becomes meaningful, resolved, and fulfilled. The Law, the prophets, the covenants—all are "types," shadows that find their reality in Jesus. The veiled logic of Judaism is unveiled in Christianity.

7.3 The scandal of messianic expectation after the cross

To continue awaiting the Messiah after the crucifixion, Pascal suggests, is to deny the singular event that Judaism had been pointing toward. The crucifixion, which seems like a defeat, is in fact the completion of all temple sacrifices and prophetic foreshadowing. The scandal is twofold: that the Messiah should suffer, and that His coming was not universally recognized by His own people. But to Pascal, this very scandal affirms the truth—it matches the pattern of God's work in history, which often defies human expectation.

7.4 Pascal's respect: continuity without salvific parity

Though Pascal insists that salvation is through Christ alone, his posture toward the Jews is one of awe, not contempt. He honors their role as faithful keepers of divine mysteries, even as he

sorrowfully notes their blindness to their fulfillment. He offers neither triumphalism nor supersessionist arrogance, but a kind of theological mourning. The Church, for Pascal, does not destroy Judaism but completes it—elevating it from a veiled promise to an unveiled gospel. This respect is neither relativism nor pluralism; it is a Christocentric reverence that sees in Judaism the handwriting of God, now fully revealed in the incarnate Word.

8. Kierkegaard: Christianity as the "Offense" Judaism Refused

8.1 The paradox of the God-Man

For Søren Kierkegaard, the heart of Christianity lies in the paradox that God became man — not merely incarnate in some symbolic sense, but fully human and subject to suffering and death. This paradox, which Kierkegaard calls the "absolute paradox," is inherently offensive to reason. Judaism, as a historical faith rooted in divine transcendence and law, could not accept this paradox. The expectation of a triumphant Messiah stood in sharp contrast to a crucified one. The incarnation, in Kierkegaard's view, shatters all philosophical and religious categories, forcing the individual into a moment of decision: accept the paradox in faith, or recoil from it in offense.

8.2 Why the cross divides history into before and after

The crucifixion, for Kierkegaard, is not simply an historical event — it is a rupture, a qualitative shift that divides time itself. It does not merely fulfill prophecy; it inaugurates a new ontological order. Before Christ, humanity stood under the law and expectation; after Christ, humanity stands before the God who suffered. This historical moment becomes the existential "moment" for each individual: a personal now in which one either accepts the absurdity of the crucified God or remains trapped in aesthetic, ethical, or religious self-deception.

8.3 Judaism's refusal as existential, not ethnic

Kierkegaard avoids any ethnic essentialism in his critique of Judaism. His concern is not with a people-group but with a spiritual posture. To refuse Christ is not a racial failing but an existential one — a refusal of the offense, a retreat into law, symbol, or ethics to avoid the staggering leap of faith. This existential refusal is not limited to Jews; it is the universal temptation of all humanity. The "Jew" becomes, in this framework, a figure for the human unwillingness to be scandalized by God's abasement.

8.4 True faith as the leap into the crucified Messiah

For Kierkegaard, to become a Christian is not to accept a doctrine, join a church, or assent to historical facts. It is to stand before the offense of the cross and leap — in fear and trembling, in paradox and passion. Judaism's refusal of Jesus, then, is a refusal to leap. It chooses continuity, coherence, and covenantal safety over the disorienting abyss of faith. Yet this very leap —

irrational, offensive, and impossible to systematize — is the only path to truth. The cross is not the end of Judaism merely; it is the end of all merely human attempts to reach God.

9. C.S. Lewis: The New Hidden in the Old

9.1 Israel as Divine Preparation

Lewis saw the Old Testament not merely as a precursor, but as a divinely orchestrated narrative scaffold upon which the Incarnation could be intelligibly understood. The patterns of law, sacrifice, exile, and deliverance in the Hebrew Scriptures were not arbitrary, but preparatory. Israel was not chosen merely for historical preservation but to shape the very categories through which humanity could recognize the Messiah when He came. This formative role included theological grammar—atonement, covenant, holiness—that culminated in Christ.

9.2 Christ as Completion of the Story Israel Began

For Lewis, Jesus is not an interruption but the consummation of Israel's long, unfinished narrative. What began with Abraham's covenant finds its true telos in the crucified and risen Christ. This fulfillment is not antagonistic to Israel's history but retroactively makes sense of it. Lewis likens this to the way the final chapters of a great novel can cast earlier pages in a new light without erasing them. Thus, Christ is not simply added to the story—He is its long-awaited ending.

9.3 Christianity as the "True Myth"

Perhaps Lewis's most distinctive contribution is the concept of Christianity as the "true myth"—a myth in the highest sense, not a falsehood, but a deep narrative that satisfies the spiritual imagination while also being historically true. He believed that God had prepared humanity through many myths (Jewish and pagan alike), but only in Christ did myth become fact. Judaism, uniquely among these, was both mythic and historical: its sacrificial and prophetic traditions were not human constructs but divine rehearsals for reality.

9.4 The Kindness and Firmness of Fulfillment Theology

Lewis held a generous but clear view of Judaism in relation to Christianity. While expressing profound respect for the Jewish people and traditions, he did not hesitate to affirm that Christianity supersedes Judaism not by annihilation but by fulfillment. The old was honored, but it was also surpassed. In this sense, Lewis navigated between two errors: triumphalism that disdains the Old, and relativism that denies the New. His fulfillment theology maintains the dignity of the Law while asserting the gracious finality of the Gospel.

10. Post-Crucifixion Judaism: Transformation, Not Continuation

10.1 Rabbinic Judaism as a Reinvention After Temple Destruction

Following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, Judaism underwent a radical transformation. With the priesthood dissolved and sacrificial worship ended, the locus of Jewish religious life shifted from the Temple to the synagogue, from priest to rabbi, from altar to text. This marked the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism—a deeply resilient, interpretive tradition centered on the Oral Torah, commentary (Midrash, Mishnah, Talmud), and halakhic development. While rooted in the past, this form of Judaism was not a seamless continuation of biblical religion but a creative and necessary reinvention.

10.2 No Priesthood, No Sacrifices, No Temple—Implications for Covenantal Continuity

From the Christian perspective, the absence of the Temple cult has theological implications far beyond liturgy. According to the Torah, the priesthood, Temple, and sacrificial system were central mechanisms for atonement and covenantal maintenance. Their disappearance presents a theological crisis: how is sin addressed without sacrifice? Christianity resolves this through the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 9–10). Judaism, by contrast, responds through prayer, repentance, and Torah study—elevating these as substitutes or transformations of the Temple functions. The divergence reveals incompatible logics of covenantal continuity.

10.3 Christian View: Covenant Ended; Jewish View: Covenant Adapted

Christians generally hold that the Mosaic covenant was fulfilled and rendered obsolete by the New Covenant in Christ. Paul writes that the Law was a tutor leading to Christ, now completed in Him (Galatians 3:24–25). Hebrews declares the old covenant “obsolete” and “ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:13). Judaism, however, maintains that the covenant endures eternally, with the mode of observance changing to fit historical realities. This includes the rabbinic mechanisms of adaptation, like fences around the Law and interpretive fluidity. The result is not merely historical disagreement but an irreconcilable theological rift.

10.4 Why This Divergence Is Theologically Unavoidable

The split between post-Temple Judaism and Christianity is not simply institutional but metaphysical. It touches the very core of how each tradition understands God’s action in history. If Jesus is the Messiah and the true Temple (John 2:19–21), then Judaism, in rejecting Him, must necessarily reconstruct itself without the fulfillment it was meant to receive. Conversely, if Jesus is not the Messiah, then Christianity becomes a deviation from Torah rather than its telos. The divergence, then, is not a misunderstanding to be resolved but a consequence of incompatible theological premises. Each faith must remain faithful to its vision of God's covenantal plan—and therefore cannot affirm the other without surrendering its own foundation.

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11. The New Covenant: Universality Replaces Particularity

The advent of the New Covenant in Christ represents not merely a progression in theological understanding but a categorical transformation of covenantal structure—from particularity to universality. Where the Old Covenant was marked by ethnic boundaries, ritual prescriptions, and national identity, the New Covenant opens salvation to all people, transcending genealogical descent from Abraham. This shift, though controversial, lies at the very heart of Christian self-understanding and the theological demarcation from post-Temple Judaism.

11.1 From Ethnic Covenant to Universal Invitation

The New Covenant, as prophesied in **Jeremiah 31:31–34**, is written not on stone tablets but on human hearts, breaking the ethnic bounds of covenantal identity. Where the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants were circumscribed by descent and nationhood, the New Covenant offers grace to "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9). Paul emphasizes this in **Galatians 3:28–29**—there is neither Jew nor Greek in Christ, for all are Abraham's seed through faith. This marks a decisive theological pivot: salvation is no longer mediated through national Israel but through personal union with the Messiah.

11.2 Baptism Replacing Circumcision

In **Colossians 2:11–12**, Paul draws a direct analogy between circumcision and baptism, describing the latter as a spiritual circumcision "not done by the hands of men." Circumcision, once the visible sign of entrance into the covenant community of Israel, is now replaced by baptism—an act open to all, male and female, Jew and Gentile. This transition signifies a move from the external and hereditary to the internal and volitional. It also democratizes entry into the covenant: no longer does one need to be born into the promise; one is reborn into it.

11.3 Eucharist Replacing Sacrifice

With the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD and the cessation of the sacrificial system, Judaism faced a crisis of worship. Christianity, however, understood this as the completion of the sacrificial system in the once-for-all offering of Christ. The **Eucharist**, instituted at the Last Supper (cf. Luke 22:20), becomes the New Covenant meal, a liturgical participation in the eternal sacrifice of Christ. As **Hebrews 10:10–14** declares, "by one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." The Eucharist thus replaces Temple sacrifice not as mere metaphor, but as theological fulfillment.

11.4 Augustine: "In Abraham, All Nations Are Blessed"—Fulfilled in Christ

For Augustine, the Abrahamic promise was never merely about national Israel. Citing **Genesis 12:3** and **Galatians 3:8**, he sees the blessing of all nations as prefiguring the Gospel's universality. Abraham believed before he was circumcised, making him the father not just of the

Jews but of all who believe (cf. Romans 4:11–12). Thus, the New Covenant does not negate the promises made to the patriarchs; rather, it fulfills them by extending their blessings to the entire human family. In this light, Augustine affirms the deep continuity between Old and New, while also insisting that the old forms—ritual, ethnic exclusivity, Temple centrality—have given way to their Christic realization.

Together, these subsections articulate a core Christian claim: that the New Covenant is not a side branch or sectarian innovation but the telos—the goal and fulfillment—of Israel's sacred history. Universality is not a betrayal of particularity but its flowering.

12. Theological, Ethical, and Interfaith Implications

12.1 Why supersessionism need not be anti-Jewish

Supersessionism—the belief that the Church fulfills and thereby supersedes Israel in God's redemptive plan—has historically carried dangerous anti-Jewish implications, especially when distorted by political or cultural prejudice. Yet the core theological claim, properly understood, is not that Israel is rejected or demeaned, but that its covenantal mission is fulfilled in Christ and extended to all nations. In this light, supersession is not replacement in a derogatory sense, but completion and expansion. The Church is not called to boast over the root (Rom. 11:18), but to receive with reverence what Israel carried forward. This reading allows for a supersessionism rooted in continuity, not contempt.

12.2 The danger of triumphalism

Despite theological nuance, Christian triumphalism has often emerged from misapplied supersessionist thinking. The temptation is to interpret Israel's historical judgment—such as the destruction of the Temple or dispersion—as divine vindication of the Church. But the New Testament itself cautions against this mindset, especially in Paul's epistle to the Romans. God's covenantal history is marked by mercy and mystery, not just judgment. Christian arrogance toward Jews misunderstands the fragility of grace and the sobering warning that "you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear" (Rom. 11:20).

12.3 Christian humility in light of Israel's election

Israel's election remains foundational, not obsolete. The very categories of covenant, prophecy, Messiah, and redemption are intelligible only because of Israel's role. Augustine's image of the Jew as a "witness people" is pastoral as well as theological—reminding Christians that they are grafted into a story not their own. Ethically, this calls for gratitude, not condescension. Interfaith respect arises not from downplaying theological differences but from rightly locating the Christian story within the Jewish one. This humility is both historical and spiritual.

12.4 Modern debates: post-Holocaust theology vs. classical dogma

The Shoah (Holocaust) shattered many Christian assumptions about supersessionist theology. In the aftermath, thinkers such as Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr, and later Jewish-Christian dialogues challenged classical formulations, urging a reassessment of the Church's stance toward Israel. Some proposed "dual covenant" theories; others argued for a reconfiguration of fulfillment theology that maintained Christological centrality without dismissing Jewish continuity. These debates remain unresolved, but they highlight the ethical weight theology bears in history. The Church must wrestle with its legacy, seeking both faithfulness to its confession and justice in its posture toward Judaism. This tension—between fidelity and responsibility—remains one of the great theological challenges of our age.

13. Conclusion: The Cross as the End of One Covenant and the Birth of Another

13.1 What unites Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Pascal, Kierkegaard, and Lewis

Despite differing contexts, temperaments, and theological emphases, these six thinkers converge on a shared Christological center: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ mark a definitive transition in salvation history. For all of them, the Old Covenant given to Israel was not merely replaced but fulfilled, transformed, and universalized in the person of Christ. Their various writings express a consistent theological conviction that the Jewish scriptures and the history of Israel find their telos in Jesus—the Logos made flesh.

13.2 Christianity's claim: the Old Covenant is fulfilled, not abolished

The apostolic witness (Rom. 10:4; Heb. 8:13) affirms that Christ is the culmination of the Law and the Prophets. Christian theology, from patristic to modern times, has held that the Old Covenant's types, shadows, and rituals pointed toward Christ. His crucifixion is not merely a historical rupture but a theological consummation. It does not annul the covenantal story but completes it in a way that reorients its meaning toward a global humanity rather than a single ethnos.

13.3 Judaism's continued existence: mystery and testimony

The persistence and vitality of post-Temple Judaism is a profound mystery for many Christian theologians. While some interpret it as a refusal of the Gospel, others see in it an enduring witness to God's promises and faithfulness—even if, from a Christian view, that witness is incomplete. The Jewish people remain, in Paul's language (Rom. 11), "beloved for the sake of the patriarchs," and their spiritual journey constitutes an ongoing theological question, not a resolved historical footnote.

13.4 The cross as both closure and opening into universal grace

The crucifixion marks the end of sacrificial religion and the beginning of a new order founded not on lineage or legal observance, but on grace, faith, and the indwelling Spirit. It closes the covenant made at Sinai and opens a door for all nations to enter the family of God through Christ. The cross, then, is not merely a dividing line but a hinge—turning history from particular election to universal invitation. It is, paradoxically, the end of one covenant and the eternal beginning of another.

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